

4th Brigade, 95th Division (IT)

“THE CONNECTION”

8020 Army Drive, Grand Prairie, Texas 75051

This is an authorized unofficial 4th Brigade bulletin

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BRIGADE COMMANDER

I want to remind everyone in the brigade that our major Strategic Planning and Management document for the way we do business is 95th Division Regulation 5-1. Everyone needs to be familiar with the regulation. If you do not have a copy of it, you can easily access it by going to the 95th Division's web site of www.army.mil/95Div and printing a copy. Become familiar with this regulation, as it is the roadmap for how we do business.

Our money situation for the year is still very tight. Based on the current funding that we have, we should be able to do most of the mission and mission support activities. However, our travel budget (OMAR) is very tight and we have to cut to the bare minimum instructor travel and other activities requiring travel funds. Mr. Hall has scrubbed this during the past week and some that were planning to travel will not be able to due to our limited funds. This situation will exist until we get additional funds – which are probable but not definite. If we get additional funds, we will be able to do conferences and other activities, however probably not everything that we would like to do. Bottom line, we need to live within the fund that we have, do things smart and frugal, and fund first the high priority items.

NCOERS. There has been significant progress in reducing the backlog of NCOERS/OERs. The latest report I have shows the brigade at 90% current. This is good, but still does not meet the standard in 95th Division Reg 5-1 – which is 95% current. I will be reviewing status with each battalion commander and expect continued command emphasis to meet and stay at the standard.

Finally, best wishes for a great holiday season. Take time to think of our fellow soldiers that are not home for the holidays, doing the US Army's work in far away lands so all citizens of the United States can be free. Pat yourself on the back and be proud to be a part of the US Army.

VICTORY TEAM

COL Tuttle

COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR

WHY WE SERVE!

This past weekend, I was fortunate to hear the words of a great soldier from America's Army, Cynthia Pritchett, Command Sergeant Major of the Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth speak at a recruiting function in Houston, Texas.

The theme that permeated the night was, "why we serve" and do what we do. She stated immediately up front that it was not for the money, but for the love of our convictions. She encouraged all to always tell and share their part of the Army Story with the public.

Public opinion and misconceptions about the Army has always been fascinating to me, to say the least. I will never forget being questioned one day by my colleagues at Indiana University, where I once taught, "why are you in the Army." And I distinctly remember, without hesitation saying that the people I serve with are my family and we all take care of each other! I was offended by the question, because it was stated in a tone of, why would you want to be in the Army?

This past Monday, with CSM Pritchett's words still in my head, I started my computer up and logged on to my Email and found the following story forwarded to me from a retired CSM and good friend of mine:

TRAGEDY CHANGES OPINION OF ARMY

(Editor's note: The following letter was written by Krista Kelly McNeill, 16, and sent to her brother's battalion commander as an open letter to the Army. Krista was the youngest sister of Spc. Michael J. McNeill of the 317th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized). Following a rotation at the National Training Center in the California desert, McNeill was preparing vehicles for rail load back to Fort Benning, Ga., when he was struck by a car.)

It is amazing how a person's life can change in a matter of minutes. It is amazing how one incident can change your views forever.

In my case it was a death in the family. I lost my brother, Spc. Michael James (Hogue) McNeill on May 12. This incident has changed my feelings about the military and military life, forever.

I remember the day my brother got hurt very clearly. It was May 5. I returned home from school to see my father walking out the door with a suitcase in one hand and a plane ticket confirmation in the other. I was informed that my brother had been struck by a car, going full speed, while he was crossing a street on foot with two of his Army buddies. He was not expected to make it through the night.

My father left immediately. That is where it all began. From the minute my father and brother's wife arrived, they were treated like royalty. The Army was right there by their side, no matter what they needed. The Army provided them with a place to stay, transportation and what was needed most of all: a shoulder to cry on.

Before this point, I never thought of military people as being compassionate and caring. But as I came to learn as things went on, they are more caring, understanding and compassionate than most civilian people.

A week passed, and suddenly, on May 12, my brother breathed his last breath. He had passed away. At this point, I thought that the Army would no longer be helpful or cooperative with my family. I figured they would think that since my brother had passed away, that there was no more use in trying to please anyone. I figured they would try to save money any way they could. But, as I later learned, this was not the case at all.

They helped my family return home and made them as comfortable as possible right up until the end. I would have thought that the military would think about nothing other than their own wants and needs, but once again, they proved me wrong.

Apparently, they put my brother on full retirement with total disability before he died so that his beautiful wife and their soon expected child would be taken care of. This touched me deeply.

The thing that touched me the most was my brother's funeral itself. The military paid for almost all of the expenses and helped a great deal with the planning of the services. The day of the funeral is imbedded so deeply in my heart. It was May 19 to be exact.

Everyone gathered at the funeral home to pay their last respects to my brother. Michael's body was soon being loaded into the hearse and proceeded, followed by many cars, to the Lakeview Cemetery.

As I followed the hearse, we entered the cemetery to see a lone man, in uniform, holding a bugle under his arm. With great discipline and ceremony, he saluted the hearse as it went by and turned, with the hearse, 180 degrees as it proceeded to the burial site.

At the burial site, the preacher said a few more words, and a silence fell all about. After the passage of a few moments, seven soldiers in uniform with rifles shouldered came marching in perfect synchronization and stopped a short distance away. They raised their rifles and each of them fired three shots into the air with the sound of each shot piercing my heart, bringing out all the love and respect that was felt for my brother. Once again, silence fell about. Then off in the distance was heard a beautiful noise, rolling off the end of the young man's bugle. Each note slowly tearing away at me, making it easier to let go. Each note bringing the remembrance of my brother and how he served his country, his family, his God.

Intense is the only word to describe those few minutes of pain, remembrance and love that came with the playing of Taps. The playing stopped. Then the six soldiers, unarmed, came marching in unison without a single misstep up to my brother's casket. Perfectionists, they were, folding the flag ever so carefully that had once lain upon my brother's casket, making sure not so much as a thread ever touched the ground. A single Soldier marched up to my brother's wife, Jenna, and placed the flag upon her lap, presenting it to her on behalf of the president of the United States, and with great reverence and respect, he stood in a final salute to her. But then, something very unusual happened. As with Jenna, a single soldier approached my brother's mother and my father and presented them with flags also, ones that were already neatly folded and placed in fine wooden boxes, decorated with the United States Seal and containing all of Michael's ribbons.

These did not come from the government's money. These came from the pockets of the men who served with my brother in his battalion. Knowing of Mike's beginnings and the strange turns his life had taken wherein he had two families, containing eight sisters, all of whom he loved dearly, they had raised the money to purchase these for his parents. This showed me that the military is one big family.

In the military, whether you like the people you are around or not, you do everything in your power to protect one another and their loved ones. What an honor I found this to be, to have been a part of Michael's life, someone who had served his country so diligently.

This event has changed my life and touched my heart forever. I have grown a deep love for the military and those who are a part of it. I realized that they are there to help me. The military is one big family that I may hope some day to be a part of. I hope to one day walk in Michael's footsteps, my father's only son, on a path also taken by Mike's father and his father before him. My respect and admiration for the military has grown immensely.

I want to say thanks to all of the people who have helped me, protected me and loved me enough to go to war for me, and a special thanks to the men who have helped my brother's memory live on. This is for you.

Krista Kelly McNeill
Johnson City, Ill.

Command Sergeant Major Grimes

BRIGADE S1

RECURRING SUSPENSE REPORTS

There is a recurring suspense to report DLER information to the brigade commander on a **weekly** basis. This topic remains to be a priority due to the high number of backlogged evaluation reports.

There is also a recurring suspense for Blank & Invalid Data. This has consistently been a problem and there remains to be a **monthly** suspense on this item. Some units have made great progress in cleaning up this data, however, some need to do considerable work to meet the standard.

EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

MONTHLY MGIB EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE ALLOWANCE BEGINNING: OCTOBER, 2000

MGIB-SELECTED RESERVE (CHAPTER 1606):

Type of Training:

	Full Time	¾ Time	½ Time	Less ½ Time
Institutional	\$263.00	\$197.00	\$131.00	\$65.75
Cooperative	\$263.00	N/A	N/A	N/A
Correspondence	Entitlement Charged at Rate of One Month per \$263 paid			
Apprentice OJT	First 6 months \$197.25, Second 6 months \$144.65, Remainder of the program \$92.05			
Flight	Entitlement Charged at Rate of One Month per \$263 paid			

MGIB-ACTIVE (CHAPTER 30):

Full Participants:

Type of Training:

	Full Time	¾ Time	½ Time	Less ½ Time
Institutional	\$552.00	\$414.00	\$276.00	\$275-\$138*
Cooperative	\$552.00	N/A	N/A	N/A
Institutional	Entitlement Charged at Rate of One Month per \$552.00 paid			
Cooperative	First 6 months \$414.00, Second 6 months \$303.60, Remainder of the program \$193.20			
Flight	Entitlement Charged at Rate of One Month per \$552.00 paid			

Persons Whose Initial Duty Obligation Was Less

Than Three Years and Who Served Less Than Three Years:

Type of Training:

	Full Time	¾ Time	½ Time	Less ½ Time
Institutional	\$449.00	\$336.75	\$224.50	\$224.50-\$112.25*

*Amount determined by educational course load (between ½ and ¾ time).

BRIGADE S3

TRAINING

Training schedules are required 120 days out to HQ, 4th BDE from Commanders / S-3s. Send these schedules to the BDE S-3, ATTN: CPT Karen Boyer. Approved training schedules must be posted at your units 90 days out.

Changes to training schedules must be faxed to CPT Karen Boyer immediately following drill. Informal changes (e.g. handwritten) are acceptable.

All units should conduct make-up APFTs immediately. APFT and weight control personnel are required to flag soldiers who failed or who have failed to take the APFT and to flag soldiers who did not meet the height / weight or allowable body fat requirements.

OPERATIONS AND PLANS

All movement plans from battalions have been received and are currently being reviewed with the exception of 7th BN.

A reminder that there is **monthly** update of the brigade consolidated YTC for DCSOPS.

The next brigade conference call is scheduled for 20 1400 JAN 01.

Division will conduct a staff assisted visit to the 9th BN (26-27 JAN 01).

Accreditation for the 4th BDE battalions is currently underway.

The BDE S-3 is in the process of planning a move of 9-95th Reg 77W, 77F, and 92A from Fort Lee to an alternate site in TY02.

Battalion commanders should be prepared to rehearse the CG YSB briefing in February 2001 (date TBD). Battalion commanders will brief the YSB for FY02 to the Commanding General on 25 March 2001 in Oklahoma City, OK.

BRIGADE S4

UNIT CRESTS

Six hundred unit crests are on order to be distributed brigade-wide. Estimated arrival time will be mid February. See your Supply Sergeant for more details.

ARMY PHYSICAL FITNESS UNIFORM

The new Army Physical Fitness Uniform is working its way through the supply system. At the present time, the T-Shirt and shorts only will be authorized for issue. Soldiers should stop by the S-4 Office to initiate the documentation for issue.

FOOD SERVICE

The Brigade Headquarters now has a new food service relationship with Luby's Cafeterias. During drill weekends, we will eat at Luby's Cafeteria at 980 West Pioneer in Grand Prairie. It is located approximately 6.7 miles from the Headquarters and should cut down significantly on travel time. Look for strip maps at the January drill.

SIDPERS3 DISTRIBUTION

The S4 section will be working with the 7-95th Reg (PS) to move more SIDPERS3 systems to other locations so the 75B and 75H classes can be taught to POI standards. The brigade liaison officers still need to work with the unit and Reserve centers to get the locations approved and MOAs established with the facility OIC for these dedicated classrooms.